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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MEETING ON DEPLOYMENT OF ELECTION MONITORS

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11. (U) SUMMARY: The Embassy convened a meeting with U.S. NGOs and others on January 30 to discuss numbers and deployments of election monitors for Nigeria's April national elections. Given the size of Nigeria and the number of polling stations, the international monitor presence will be relatively small, but nevertheless difficult to coordinate. There are serious deficiencies in the current domestic monitoring framework; the Mission is trying to address them. Additional training resources may be urgently required (see para 5). END SUMMARY.

12. (U) NDI/Carter Center expects 25-30 monitors for the April 12 National Assembly elections (possibly led by former Secretary Albright) and an additional 30 (for a minimum total of 50) for the April 19 presidential election (possibly led by FPOTUS Carter and former Namibian Prime Minister Hage Geingob). IRI expects 50 monitors (10 will be here for National Assembly elections), split into 15 field teams of three and an Abuja-based headquarters component. The BHC, speaking on behalf of the EU and the Commonwealth, expects 106 monitors from the EU for both elections and 15-25 from the Commonwealth. The BHC representative understood that the Japanese might also send monitors. It is probable that there will be other monitoring groups, perhaps from the AU, ECOWAS and SADC. The likely minimum number of international monitors is 215, and the maximum is not likely to exceed 250. A UNEAD official commented repeatedly that each group should engage in an "internal dialogue" before there could be an inter-group discussion of coordinating deployments.

13. (U) The Independent National Electoral Commission is hosting a meeting February 14 for international monitors to discuss accreditation and expectations. An INEC meeting for domestic groups interested in monitoring was postponed from February 4 to the week of February 10 (two days during that week are likely to be Nigerian national holidays).

14. (SBU) The presence of international monitors will be important but the amount of coverage they will provide will be limited. With some 120,000 polling places, comprehensive international monitoring could never be a realistic prospect. Unfortunately, each of the various monitoring groups appears inclined to attempt "national" coverage with their respective 25-100 monitors. Among them, however, only NDI had a basic concept in place. The danger is that each group might visit the same states, or even the same Local Government Areas. A second meeting will be held the week of February 18, and the groups have been invited to produce a document similar to NDI's, as well as a summary explanation for their proposed deployments. The assembled groups will then attempt to work out specific places of deployment to minimize redundancy and maximize spread of coverage. (COMMENT: Notwithstanding the UNEAD official's harping on the need for each group to have an "internal dialogue" on deployment before discussing coordination and his thought that coordination might ultimately prove impossible. We are optimistic that a useful level of coordination can be attained. END COMMENT.)

15. (SBU) All participants in the January 30 meeting agreed that, even if international monitors coordinate well, a heavy burden for assessing the conduct of the electoral process would fall on the domestic monitors. Unfortunately, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG - whose credibility was damaged by its inability to field the promised number of monitors for the September 2002 registration process) and the Justice Development and Peace Committee (JDPC - affiliated with the Catholic Church), the two major domestic monitoring groups, are barely talking with each other. Moreover, both groups draw their strength from southern Nigeria and the peoples indigenous to the

South. The Mission is trying to encourage groups with Northern roots that might be able to deploy large numbers of monitors to consider attending the INEC meeting for domestic monitors. We are making progress on this objective, and may need additional training resources urgently.

JETER